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CATAWBA COUNTY OFFICIALS PARTICIPATE IN INTEROPERABILITY POLICY ACADEMY

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Catawba County Commissioner Barbara G. Beatty, Emergency Services Director David Weldon, Chief Information Officer Terry Bledsoe and Sgt. Lynn Baker of the Catawba County Sheriff's Office Records Division recently participated in an Interoperability Policy Academy to discuss ways to strengthen local and regional emergency first responder communications policies and procedures. The Academy, held on February 7 - 8 in Nashville, Tenn., was sponsored by the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National League of Cities (NLC). City of Hickory Executive Assistant Warren Wood also attended the academy.

"The ability of local first responders to communicate with each other, as well as neighboring counties and cities, in real time is incredibly important during an emergency," Commissioner Beatty said. "Disasters in recent years have made this crystal clear."

Featured speakers included: National Association of EMS Officials Program Director Kevin McGinnis, who is the Vice Chair of the SAFECOM Executive Committee; Dereck Orr, Law Enforcement Communications Manager of the National Institute for Standards and Technology; and Michael Paddock of Grants Office LLC. Representatives from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security also participated.

"Effective emergency response communications are not just about radios," said McGinnis, who has a long history of involvement with communications interoperability at the local level. "It's about building professional relationships, training, practicing, and working together as a team to protect communities. The Academy is an important step toward achieving these important objectives."

NACo and NLC partnered to offer the Academy because local governments are at the forefront of the country's focus on emergency response. All expenses for Academy participants were covered through a grant NACo received from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

More information about the Academy is available at www.naco.org.

The National League of Cities is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal governments throughout the United States. Its mission is to strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance. Working in partnership with the 49 state municipal leagues, the National League of Cities serves as a resource to and an advocate for the more than 18,000 cities, villages, and towns it represents. More than 1,600 municipalities of all sizes pay dues to NLC and actively participate as leaders and voting members in the organization. The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation's 3,066 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public's understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org

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